

National & Regional Ecotourism Strategy & Action Plan for Bulgaria

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Session A: Strategic Assessment, Planning & Implementation**



USAID in Bulgaria

- ◆ Country support launched in 1990
- ◆ Biodiversity conservation – cross-cutting theme – US\$ 10 million
- ◆ Territorial planning and governance tool
 - National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
 - Park management plans
- ◆ Economic growth tool
 - Non-timber forest products
 - Ecotourism pilot destination models



Ecotourism Strategic Planning

- ◆ 2002 – International Year of Mountains & Ecotourism
- ◆ Voluntary National Ecotourism Working Group – March 2002
- ◆ Framework created
- ◆ First National Ecotourism Forum – October 2002
- ◆ Three ministries sign Protocol at Forum

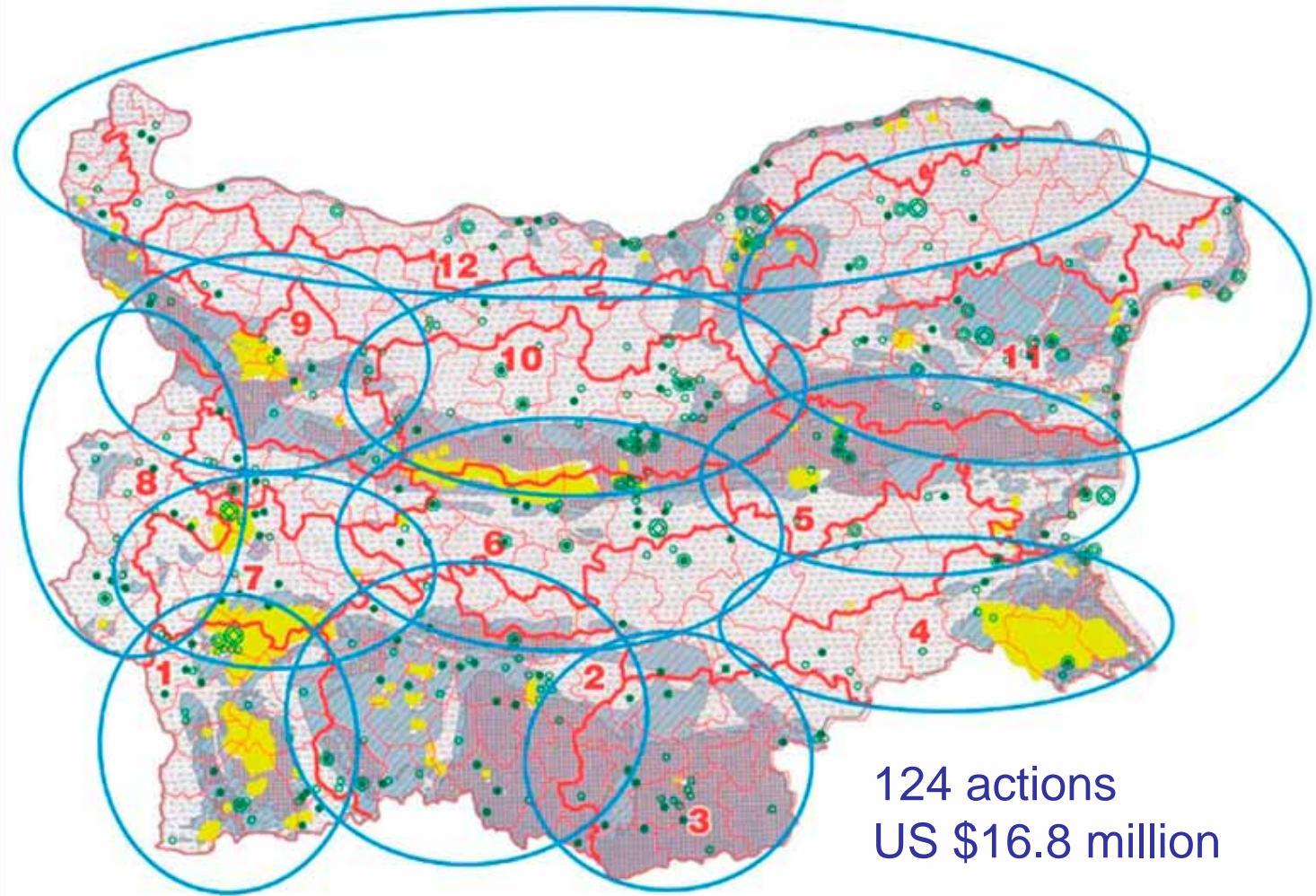


Ecotourism Development: Competitive Cluster Approach

- ◆ Community Ecotourism Associations
- ◆ National domestic ecotourism market survey
- ◆ System of indicators for success and impact measurement
- ◆ Training and manual for ecotourism product development and study tours
- ◆ Destination management plans for two Associations



Regional Ecotourism Action Planning



National Ecotourism Action Planning

36 priority actions totaling US \$15.4 million

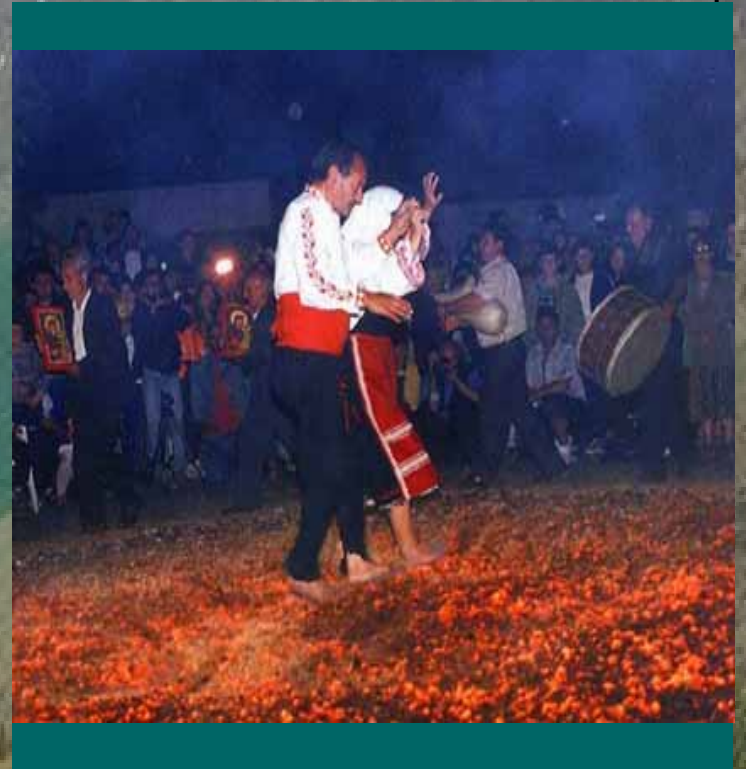


- ◆ 11 national “focus groups” planning sessions
- ◆ National definition of Ecotourism
- ◆ Hosts 2nd National Ecotourism Forum (January 2004)



Challenges

- ◆ Traditions of mass tourism
- ◆ Understanding sustainable tourism
- ◆ Collaboration among stakeholders
- ◆ Lack of national representative body
- ◆ Absence of national tourism strategy
- ◆ Intensive facilitation to ensure participation under USAID timelines



Achievements

- ◆ Generated national pride in culture, hospitality, and environment
- ◆ Created base for product diversification
- ◆ Encouraged concrete local initiatives
- ◆ Created synergies among donors
- ◆ Institutionalized a replicable planning process (NEW Group)



Lessons Learned

- ◆ Publicity at national and local levels
- ◆ Strong links with local government
- ◆ Initial focus on domestic markets to build confidence
- ◆ International networking
- ◆ Sustainable tourism development also about social and political engineering
- ◆ Enabling national environment



Recommendations

- ◆ Involve all key stakeholders from the very beginning
- ◆ Provide options for rural credit
- ◆ Provide options for human resources development



Thank you!



www.ecotourism.bulgariatravel.org

This project was implemented by ARD, Inc.

